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ABSTRACT

It is suggested that in the face of welfare reform, including lifetime limits for receipt of welfare services and an emphasis on short-term, intensive employment training, English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) instruction must be adapted to this new reality and adopt a more overt job training emphasis. An instructional formula is provided that responds to the need to produce three distinct outcomes: (1) protect the integrity of ESL instruction and remain focused on development of language abilities; (2) provide adult learners with critical content information on the world of work; and (3) develop "learning how to learn" skills (learning strategies) and broad-based on-the-job competency. The formula incorporates employment-focused content material, classroom management techniques, grouping strategies, and student involvement strategies. The formula is offered to guide ESL instructors in the development of both curriculum and classroom instructional techniques to meet these three goals. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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Technical Assistance for
English Language Training Projects
1997-1998

Sponsored by the
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How Can ESL Teachers Respond to Welfare Reform?

from **"Learning a Living"**
News bulletin from Brigitte Marshall,
Consultant Refugee Programs Bureau,
California Department of Social Services,
No. 2 1997 (Reprinted with permission, February 1998)

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California's version of welfare reform, currently being formulated within the federal framework, will involve life-time limits for receipt of welfare and an emphasis on short-term, intensive employment training, including ESL. ESL providers will be under even more pressure to make instruction more of an overt job-training tool which prepares students for the first available job. Whether or not we are in conceptual agreement with the new model of English language training that is emerging in the face of welfare reform, we are now driven by legislative reality.

In Which Direction Does Welfare Reform Steer Us?

While recognizing that proficiency in the English language remains of critical importance to an individual's chances of obtaining and maintaining self-sufficiency, it is no longer enough for ESL educators to concentrate on this challenge alone. Neither is it enough for ESL instructors to respond to current pressures simply by making content material employment focused. ESL classes must now make a "triple hit." Employment related content material should certainly be used to teach the language competencies necessary for mastery of English, but the third and crucial "hit" comes when this is done in such a way that learners are prepared for the behavioral expectations they will meet in the workplace. In brief, workplace know-how needs to be infused into the curriculum through classroom management techniques, grouping tactics and instructional involvement strategies.

The Instructional Formula that is represented on the next page has been developed to facilitate ESL instruction which responds to the need to produce three distinct outcomes, or the "triple hit." The formula recognizes the need to protect the integrity of ESL instruction and remain focused on development of language abilities. It also acknowledges the need to provide adult learners with critical content information on the world of work. Informed by the SCANS report, the formula also provides for instruction that will develop "learning how to learn" skills and broad-based on-the-job competency. The formula can be understood through treatment of the following example.

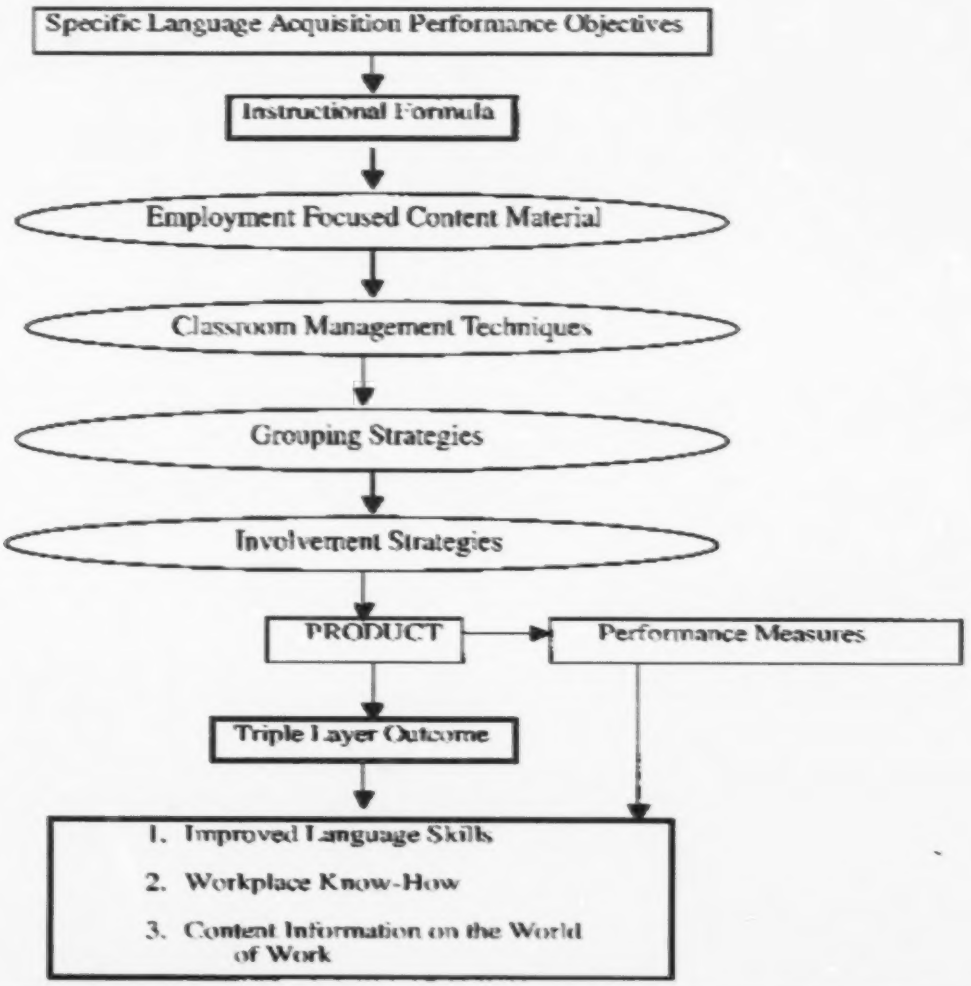
Specific Language Acquisition Performance Objective:
Students will be able to:

(i) formulate the simple past tense from present simple or future tense examples,
(ii) use an appropriate simplified version of past tense verbs on job application forms, and
(iii) follow guidelines to demonstrate correct pronunciation of past tense forms.

This objective is fed through the Instructional Formula which includes the use of **Employment Focused Content Material**. In the context of our particular example, this means that the instructor will use employment oriented sample sentences and text to model correct use of the simple past. If at all possible, the instructor will select an authentic, employment-related project which will yield a tangible product and will genuinely engage learners in the appropriate use of the simple past tense. In this example, filling out an application form provides an excellent opportunity for learners to practice use of the simple past and produce an outcome which both they and their instructor can use to evaluate competency in the three target areas:

1. Improved language skills.
2. Improved Workplace Know-how.
3. Increased content information on the World of Work.

Students will learn about <u>how</u> to fill out an application form correctly, they will learn about <u>what</u> employers are looking for on an application form, the way they learn these things will improve their workplace know-how skills, and they will demonstrate what they know by producing a master copy application form that demonstrates their ability to use the simple past tense, follow instructions, write legibly, and list correct phone numbers and addresses.



Instructors will utilize **Classroom Management Techniques** which involve students in interactions which replicate patterns found in the workplace. According to the SCANS Report, employers are looking for employees who can make decisions collaboratively, solve problems, think creatively and exercise responsibility. Turning over decisions on classroom management to learners is an excellent way for instructors to nurture these kinds of skills. For example, instructors can lay out an overview of the proposed activities, "I want us to work in crews of at least four people, each crew needs to have a new crew member and a senior crew member and tables need to be organized so that exits are not blocked and access to corner work stations is possible. How shall we arrange our work area?" The classroom becomes a work area, areas in the class-room where resources are stored become supplies stations or inventory control, groups become teams or crews - all to replicate the interaction patterns that will be met in the workplace. Input can also be sought on appropriate storage of personal belongings, bags, etc., with learners being asked to reach consensus on the best solution given the work environment.

Simple strategies can be developed to give learners control over how a classroom functions while also calling on them to make decisions collaboratively, solve problems, think creatively, and exercise responsibility as called for in the SCANS report. Suggestion boxes can yield excellent student input on issues from interpersonal conflicts in the classroom to chair and table organization. When issues of personal security, safety of belongings and respect for others' possessions are raised, learners are also involved in the development of the concepts of professional and interpersonal integrity and honesty that the SCANS report lists as being of critical importance.

Grouping Strategies which call for learners to work together effectively have two distinct parts. The first part is group formation. The use of permanent teams or crews has particular advantages, since it replicates a likely workplace situation. Departures and arrivals due to open-entry, open-exit can be handled just as they would be in the workplace, with senior crew members being respon-sible for training new crew members. Also, the potential for interpersonal conflict can be addressed since crew members must find a way to work things out in the long-run if they cannot rely on being in a different crew for each project. However, temporary team or crew formation also holds advantages since it provides the instructor with the opportunity to vary team size and composition and actively involve learners in the group formation process.

Group formation can also provide the opportunity for revision of subject matter already learned. For example, for our particular performance objective, an instructor might form groups for a particular section of the project by distributing cards on which sample sentences are written. All sentences cover employment related content. Some are regular verbs in the simple past tense, (add "ed"), some are regular verbs in the simple past tense, (add "d"), some are irregular verbs in the simple past tense, and some are simple past question forms. Learners group themselves according to the category of the card in their possession, so that each group has four different cards represented.

Learners in groups assume roles such as crew leader, evaluator, time keeper, and reporter. Name tags which replicate those worn in the workplace can be used to reinforce the responsibilities of each position. The instructor and learners together establish clear performance expectations for each position. Whenever possible, instructors design activities that will develop the language acquisition objective by involving learners in collaborative and cooperative group work and thereby also developing some of the competency areas outlined in the SCANS report. For example, whether working with permanent teams or groups established to fulfill a specific task, the language for role performance expectations can be drawn directly from the SCANS report. If, in conjunction with the language acquisition objective, an

instructor sees an opportunity to develop the competency area of **Resource Management,** duties can be defined as follows. The Team Leader is responsible for organizing the assignment, planning necessary activities and selecting team members to fulfill each task. The Time Keeper is responsible for allocating time for each part of the assignment and keeping team members on task. To address the competency area of **Systems Management,** the Evaluator can be asked to assess how effectively the team completed its task and make suggestions for how things might be done differently in the future.

Assigning regular duties to all learners in a classroom, with tasks organized and rewarded by group, creates a set of peer expectations for high personal performance from other group members. Learners can be given the opportunity to develop a sense that they are participating for their own benefit and because if they do well, so does their group. This awareness can be a powerful antidote to the lack of motivation exhibited by some welfare recipients, who can feel as if they have little personal control over participation in the class.

Involvement Strategies are utilized to ensure that as many learners as possible are engaged in productive activities at any one time. When learners are required to interact, problem solve, teach others and negotiate as they are engaged in language acquisition activities, they are also developing competence in areas stressed in the SCANS report. For the example being considered here, in-structors can involve groups in consideration of how certain letters impact the pronunciation of the final sound in a simple past tense verb. For example, learner teams are provided with a packet of words in the simple past tense. The instructor reads (work related) sample sentences which model correct use of one of the words. After finding the target word from the pile, learners are asked to put it in one of three categories: (i) "t" sound at the end, as in "worked"; (ii) "d" sound at the end, as in "borrowed"; (iii) "ed" sound at the end, as in "handed." After all the words have been cat-egorized, the instructor invites the teams to determine if there is a set of rules that can be estab-lished from the way the words are divided. (If the infinitive ends in "d" or "t", the past simple will end with an "ed" sound, etc.)

A variation on the same theme involves the use of Venn diagrams. Teams are asked to organize their words into a Venn diagram with words ending in a "t" sound in the left circle, words that have a double consonant (as in "slammed") in the right circle, and words that have both a double consonant and a final "t" sound (stopped) in the overlap. The same procedure is followed for words ending with a "d" sound on the left, double consonants on the right, and those with a final "d" sound and a double consonant in the overlap. Again teams are invited to establish some guidelines which will indicate whether a word with a double consonant will end with a "t" or "d" sound. For example, those with a double "f", "p", or "s" will end with a "t" sound and those with a double "m", "n", "l", "g", "z", "b", "r", etc., will end with a "d" sound. Learners will be in-volved in a group assignment which includes identification of patterns, categorization and grouping according to discovered criteria.

A jigsaw activity combined with a cloze exercise will provide learners with the opportunity to practice conjugation of the simple past tense while also teaching others and completing an assignment collaboratively. For example, four work stations are established at each corner of the room. One team member from each team goes to a work station where one part of a four part narrative is represented by a picture and cloze text with infinitive verb prompts appearing underneath the blank spaces. The learners at each work station work together to complete the paragraph, filling in the single sheet on the display board at the work station. When finished, the team members return to their original work team where each team member now has information on a different section of the narrative. Team members then recount orally the section of narrative that they understand. Each team has a set of four picture cards

which replicate the pictures at the res-pective work stations. Teams put the cards in order to make sense of the entire narrative. When this is done, teams fill out a complete version of the cloze narrative that has no infinitive verb prompts.

Review activities could include the use of question and answer cards which provide the answers to a list of written comprehension questions. When an instructor is confident that learners have mastered the simple past tense, the goal of filling out employment application forms is reintroduced. Use of the simple past tense on sections which call for **"Duties"** and/or **"Reason for Leaving"** can be demonstrated. The final product, which in this case will be an accurate, master copy application form which learners can use as a prototype when job hunting, can be placed in a portfolio. The portfolio will represent products that demonstrate a triple layer outcome - improved language skills, greater workplace know-how as per the SCANS report, and increased factual knowledge about the World of Work.

The triple layer outcome instructional formula is suggested as a guideline to assist ESL instructors. We want to protect the language acquisition integrity of what happens in our classrooms while also responding effectively to the urgent need to propel learners from the classroom and into the work-force with the widest array of learning-how-to-learn skills possible.

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